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With a large party this trip can now be made at a purely nominal expense. Owing to lack of time and adverse winds, which lashed the waters of the sea until it became quite choppy, not as many points could be visited as might have been wished, but we stopped for some time at Engedi and the mouth of the Arnon, as well as at the salt cave under Jebel Usdum (Mount Sodom). A very interesting experience was camping out under the shelter of Jebel Usdum, at the southern end of the Dead Sea, where we proved to our own satisfaction that Dead Sea drift-wood burns admirably, despite the frequent denials of this fact published in the manuals. Aside from Masada the archæological interest of such a trip is not great, and the shores are too desolate to give an opportunity for folkloristic research. On the other hand, the natural beauty of the scenery is great, especially along the Moabite coast, where the cliffs strive to emulate the handiwork of man in their hues and odd configurations. Not a few archæologists have been led by natives to supposed sculptures and inscriptions in this region, only to find on examination that Nature had played some of her strange pranks.

CENTRAL JUDAEA AND THE MARITIME PLAIN

The day after our return from the Dead Sea (March 19) we left Jerusalem for a ride through central Judaea and the coastal plain. The purpose of this trip was archæological, topographical, and folkloristic, and the six days we devoted to it were well rewarded in each of these directions. During the first two days, on the road between Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, and Beit-Jibrin, a good deal of rain fell, making travel rather unpleasant, but as soon as we got down from the highland into the foothills, or Shephelah, beautiful weather prevailed. In general the rainfall is heaviest on the highest ground.

TOMBS OF BEIT JIBRIN

We stayed in Beit-Jibrin two nights, spending the intervening day in a careful examination of the tombs in the vicinity. Thanks to the care of the Department of Antiquities, the famous painted tombs are now kept locked, and they were found in good condition, except that the colors have faded. To our surprise and pleasure we found that the inscriptions are all in good condition, but we took the opportunity to collate them again. Even the curious exchange of notes between two lovers, hastily scrawled on the soft limestone walls of the most important tomb more than two thousand years ago, is still legible throughout, except in one place. We further measured and made drawings and a photograph of the pillar-altars, which have been hitherto neglected, despite their great interest to comparative religion. In addition the inscriptions in a previously unpublished tomb were carefully copied. Without doubt a thorough survey of this region would still bring to light important undiscovered tombs. The publication of the Gerza Papyri by Mr. Edgar has thrown interesting light on the origin of this Sidonian colony in the heart of the Shephelah, established in the third century B. C. as a station on the caravan route from the land of the Nabataeans to the port of Joppa. New discoveries may contribute notably to our knowledge of the history and the religion of the Phœnician settlement in Eleutheropolis, and it is in just such a place that we may expect to find inscriptions illustrating apostolic Christianity.